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FOREIGN DOCUMENTS BRANCH

10 June 1948

MEMORANDUM TO THE CHIEF, FDB

Document Situation in Korea as of 5 January 1946

This memorandum is prepared upon request of [redacted]
It is prepared from only recollection and rough notes, the official records being unavailable.

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The Korean situation about the time of the survey made by the WDC (Adv) was tense and changing. Korean and American Military Government attitudes changed so much in the month following the survey that a team sent from Tokyo in February was actually unsuccessful in evacuating material of any real value.

The survey group, [redacted]

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[redacted] evacuated the complete records of the Kempei Tai in Korea and a few catalogues of Korean libraries. The Kempei Tai volumes (11) have been turned over to the National Archives by FDB, CIA, according to the Branch Library and Screening Sections.

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According to our survey considerable valuable material was available. However, whereas at the turn of the year and only four months after liberation the Koreans were still so anti-Japanese that they were willing to throw out anything that smelled of Nippon, a month later and probably stimulated by our survey the value of even Japanese records and official documents was beginning to be recognized.

Our findings were particularly interesting in the National Archives Building directly in the rear of the Government General Building, or Capitol. Here were well-kept shelves of, among other material, the surveys made for improvement of water systems, hydroelectric works, dams, irrigation projects, et cetera.

In what was called the "Capitol Library", then located in the garret of the capitol, were volumes of everything from Horatio Alger to official records. This was very messed up and required much screening. I do not recall whether our field team had access to this in February 1946.

As I recall, the Korean National Library and the Seoul University Library were operated in conjunction with each other.

Other sources of documents investigated were Chosen National Bank, the Oriental Development Company, which I believed remain untapped. The libraries of provincial governments were not surveyed to my knowledge.

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It is my opinion that it is highly probable that there is much strategic material available in documents held in the Allied Zone of Korea, and since Seoul (Keijo) was the Japanese government general headquarters for the country, it is likely that much of this material concerns industrial and economic information of the area north of Parallel 38.

However, while American military authorities were not overly interested in documents two years ago, I would judge that by this time they are at least familiar with the available material in the Korean document depositories.



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